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U. S. Department of Agriculture

How to Grow
Tuberous
Begonias

Palos
Verdes

BEGONIA FARM

4024 Pacific Coast Highway
Walteria, California

Near Redondo Beach

Highway 101

INSTRUCTIONS

Always buy the best stock available for you will not get choice plants or blooms from inferior tubers or seedlings.

The principal erect types of double tuberous rooted begonias in a variety of colors are (1) *Camellia*, (2) *Fimbriata Plena* or carnation, (3) *Camellia Picotee* and (4) *Rosebud*.

Lloydii Hybrids or hanging basket types have the hanging habit and therefore most suited to be grown in baskets, on walls or shelves so that one can look into the beautiful full clusters of blooms. Your garden is not complete without them.

The Christmas begonia or winter blooming type is beautiful and most colorful at Christmas time.

There are a number of other types as *Giant Single*, *Single Crested*, *Single Frilled*, *Hollyhock* (*Martiana Specie*) and *Narcissiflora* or daffodil.

TUBERS

To flower early, tubers should be laid out in empty trays or flats around the first or second week in February—keep them warm and moisten occasionally until the tubers start to sprout. It is better to keep them on the dry side rather than too wet.

When the tubers have sprouted place in flats of moist leafmold or a mixture of leafmold and peat until the sprouts are three or four inches high. Give them plenty of room for root growth. The sprouted tubers are then ready to be transplanted for the season into pots, boxes, baskets or in the ground. The best flowers and growth develop from one shoot so it is in order to remove other shoots. (Except hanging basket types). To do so, use a razor blade, cutting close to the tuber. Plant the cutting in sand and you will duplicate the parent plant. It will bloom and form a tuber the first year.

PREPARATION FOR PLANTING

When planting in pots, use eight inch pots or larger for tubers an inch and a half or larger in size. Five to seven inch pots are sufficiently large for three-quarter inch tubers or less. Since tuberous begonias are shallow rooted we suggest unglazed fern pans or unpainted redwood boxes as ideal. Glazed pots and painted boxes do not permit evaporation to keep roots cool and therefore are not as satisfactory.

When planting in the ground, partial shade, good drainage, loose soil and a quiet location is essential—begonias do not thrive where it

is windy. A moist atmosphere is essential for the best growth along with a temperature of around seventy degrees Fahrenheit.

HOW TO PLANT

The first requirement when using pots or boxes is to provide good drainage. Place a little gravel or broken pieces of pottery over drainage holes to prevent clogging. Then use a soil mixture of one-third leafmold and two-thirds sandy loam. A small amount of well-rotted manure thoroughly mixed with the above is good. Begonias like an acid soil so guard against alkalinity.

Fill the pot or box to a depth of three or four inches from the top. Fertilize at this point with a tablespoonful of any standard brand fertilizer, fishmeal or cottonseed meal—mix with the soil to a depth of one or two inches—cover with a small amount of leafmold—then plant tuber so that the top or crown of the tuber is level with the soil and about an inch down from the rim of the pot or box. It is preferable to have the tuber higher so that the water drains away from the crown. The tuber should not be covered. When planting in the ground follow the same procedure as in pots.

CARE OF PLANTS

Mulch the surface with a little peat, leafmold or Sani-Soil—do not cultivate close to the plants—keep soil moist and fertilize once more during September by adding a liquid fertilizer or dig in a tablespoonful of fishmeal around the outer edge of the pot—especially good for hanging baskets. Stake plants if required using redwood or bamboo stakes. Sprinkle leaves occasionally with a fine spray and water well at the base of the stalk. Do not make the ground soggy.

Pots set into the ground at least half way for the home garden is better than ground planting. Other plant roots do not rob the begonia roots of valuable fertilizer. You can control moisture much better and in the fall when they are through blooming the plant can be removed, pot and all, to a place for maturing or drying off. Do not cut or break off the tops—permit them to dry up.

CARE OF TUBERS

When your begonias are through blooming in October or November permit them to mature or dry up. It is easily accomplished when begonias are planted in pots or boxes. When the foliage starts to turn yellow and blooming ceases, turn the pots on their side in the garage or any sheltered place until spring—do

not remove the tuber from the soil—for a gradual drying off is necessary. A very important precaution is to avoid cutting or breaking off the top, for the strength of the season's growth returns to the tuber as it matures in the fall. In late fall or spring one may remove tuber, brush off old soil, and dead roots. Guard against bruising tubers and place them in flats covering with peat or leafmold to prevent shrinking. All parts of the old stem should be removed at this time to prevent decay.

DISEASES AND PESTS

Tuberous begonias have very few diseases or pests, especially outside. With very little care your flowers and leaf growth should be perfect.

ROT. A bruised tuber or stalk might start to decay. Expose bruised parts to sunlight, dust with bordeaux, charcoal, parisgreen or sulphur. A tuber may also decay if it is kept too moist or if stalk is broken off at the tuber.

EATING INSECTS. The Cyclamen mite attacks the veins on the under side of the leaves and stems causing leaves to curl, veins to turn brown and plant to stunt. Isolate from others and spray with a light oil as Volk. The plant may not bloom satisfactorily that season but you can save the tuber for the next year. To prevent, keep leaves and soil moist, and spray occasionally with a weak solution of garden volk.

APHIS, WORMS AND LARVAE from butterflies are best controlled by spraying with black leaf 40 in combination with volk.

SNAILS, SLUGS, AND SOWBUGS are controlled by the use of poisons used for that purpose.

OTHER PRECAUTIONS

Too much water and shade causes spindly plants and poor blooms.

Too much water and hot dry weather causes buds to fall off.

Too much fertilizer causes leaves to curl under and plant to wilt. The main point is not to overdo. Treat them as you do other plants.

If you do not have a suitable place to grow begonias our suggestion is to build a small ornamental lath house. You will also find it excellent for other plants.

Come to see us and we will be pleased to help you. Your success is our success.

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